

Because He Lives Part 2- Hope For Relationships

- We have been looking at the death & the resurrection of Jesus for the last few weeks- specifically b/c Good Friday & Easter just occurred a couple weeks back
- However, if you're new w/ us, we talk about this every week
- We try to treat every Sunday like it's Good Friday & Easter
- What I mean is, we want to take you & your questions seriously & we want to make the gospel & the hope of Jesus really clear
- However, because of the recent Easter weekend we thought it would be helpful to explain **how the resurrection changes everything**, not just the hope we have after we die
- **This, to us, isn't just a nice thing to discuss; it's ESSENTIAL!**
- **Shelly and I have really needed a break for a long time...**Hurricane Florence really damaged our home, the nightmare of dealing with our insurance company over the last 8 months, one kid is in little league, two others are in dance, we have a 8 month old, etc. We really need to be able to push pause and rest.
- Often times we end up being very short with each other, the level of grace is in the basement and we are exhausted.
- The worst part is I see it on our kids' faces when we react out of anger.
- I hate that for so many reasons & I'm embarrassed to admit it, but one of the things it does is remind you that I'm a human too & I think it helps get at what we are going to talk about today
- **We have just celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the eternal hope we have because of it, and yet time after time I forget and respond to those most important to me in a hateful way.**
- What would be different if we live every day holding onto this hope we have through the resurrection of Jesus
- How much different would everyday life be if we would live out our lives filtering every aspect of life through the hope we have because of Jesus' resurrection?
- **To me, so much of the frustrations that we face in relationships, we face b/c we don't connect the resurrection to our lives**
- **The resurrection of Jesus SHOULD change everything...**

- First off, why? Why does it change “everything”?
- Our thing w/ the resurrection is, If He’s alive- He’s God!
- That means that He’s more than just a good man
- That means that he beat death & he’s in control
- That means that the things he said REALLY MATTER

1. If Jesus Is Alive, He’s Not Just Teaching, He’s Commanding

- Not just ideas we can vote on but commands we follow
- Means we treat what Jesus said like the 10 commandments
- We aren’t meant to hear Jesus like we hear MLK, Ghandi, Mother Theresa, or even Paul- all great, none conquered death
- Listen to how Jesus lamented to being treated like a good guy...
- Luke 6:46- “Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' & not do what I tell you?”
- You’re giving me some surface respect, but you don’t OBEY!!
- Fundamental to being a Christian is understanding that, to us, Jesus is God BECAUSE HE CAME BACK FROM THE DEAD 😊
- We don’t think he’s God b/c of his awesome teachings
- We don’t think he’s God b/c of his kindness towards others
- There have been good teachers & kind people...they’re dead
- We think Jesus is God EXCLUSIVELY b/c He conquered death
- Ok, so these are “commands”...let’s give it a go... “try Jesus”
- What you quickly find out, especially for some of you that are relatively new Christians...

2. Jesus’ Commands Are Radically Counter-Cultural

- Not just counter our culture, but counter EVERY culture
- Today we’re talking about how the resurrection shapes the way we treat others, b/c so much of what he taught was on this
- The way he said we were to treat people made Jesus sound like he was from another planet...now, that would be easy to just write off & put in the “weird” category IF he’s just a teacher
- “Hey, he said plenty of things that were worth quoting”
- BUT, remember, if he rose from the dead, these aren’t just Jesus’ thoughts on how we treat spouses, children, other ethnicities, enemies, the weak, the powerful...
- THESE aren’t just teachings. THESE are Commands!
- “What did he say about relationships that was so crazy?”
- Luke 6:26-29- ““But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer

the other also, & from one who takes away your cloak do not w/hold your tunic either.”

- “Oh no. No. We don’t like that. Whole lotta nope!” ☺
- Luke 6:32-35- ““If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, & do good, & lend, expecting nothing in return, & your reward will be great, & you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful & the evil.”
- Wonder why he said in Verse 46- “not do what I tell you?”
- There is SO MUCH of this kind of teaching that Jesus gave
- The ONLY reason to follow anything like this is BECAUSE HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD & THEREFORE THESE ARE COMMANDS! ☺
- Because he’s alive- he gets to call all the shots & we go to his teachings (now commands) on relationships & say “command us”
- These Commands Are VERY Different To Our “Normal”
- What seems normal to us? I’m not saying you like all the following, but I think we chalk it up to “just human nature”
- We are divisive, we gossip, slander, racists, covet, want to take out vengeance, want to murder people, lie to get our way or get what we want, we take advantage of the weak
- We see it so much, we do it & we have it done to us, to the point that it feels normal to us (like a fish in water)
- At one point we were all ok w/ segregation. Now, if we said that other races had to sit in the back of a bus...
- But the thing about God is that HE’S NEVER BEEN OK W/ THIS
- He’s never once thought, “Segregation is No Big Deal”
- God is always outraged by evil, EVEN when we are not!
- In 2017: 17,284 people were murdered in the U.S. (scary)
- In 2017: 879,000 abortions took place in the U.S.
- Right now, we are NOT outraged by the murder of innocent babies, pray to God that we will be. It’s unbelievable. But it’s “human nature”
- God hates all wickedness & wants the world rid of it
- So, when Jesus (God) comes & teaches on relationships & says things that sound strange & counter-culture, they are!

- Because He's coming from a Heavenly culture where this has never & will never exist. It's not tolerated. Angels aren't doing this to one another & the Father says, "Angels will be angels"
- The only example we have is when Satan thought for a moment he deserved what God alone deserved & Jesus said...
- Luke 10:18- "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."
- That's what God thought of Satan's attitude. That's how long he tolerated it. It went so fast, it was like lightning
- We have our own teachings on how to treat others that are in stark opposition to Jesus' teachings. **Only one of us can be right.**
- We can say, "That's weird Jesus" but, are our teachings not weirder?
- **Are we really the ones to be trusted?**
- Look over our shoulders at so many thousands of years of abuse, murder, deception, betrayal, molestation, & genocide...
- **Should we get to call the shots on what's right & wrong? No!**
- Truth is, you start off being startled, but over time you begin to appreciate

3. Jesus' Commands Are Profoundly Beautiful!

- As you get into this life of following these commands, you find something that's not only different, it is SO beautiful!
- You find the kind of life we were made for, that we desire so deeply, but that we just can't seem to find here on earth!
- What do I mean, well, consider this challenging teaching...
- Luke 14:12-14- "He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, **lest they also invite you in return & you be repaid**. But when you give a feast, **invite the poor**, the crippled, the lame, the blind, & you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. **For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.**"
- Doesn't that seem "unreal"- who's actually ever done this???
- Jesus says, love & serve people who have no chance of ever doing anything in return...& get repaid in the resurrection!
- Through this, we become completely different people & it's all BECAUSE of the Resurrection! Listen to how Colossians says it
- Colossians 3:1-15- "**If then you have been raised w/ Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on**

things that are on earth. For you have died, & your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear w/ him in glory. **Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:** sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, & covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. **But now you must put them all away:** anger, wrath, malice, slander, & obscene talk from your mouth. **Do not lie to one another**, seeing that you have put off the old self w/ its practices & **have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.** **HERE there is not** Greek & Jew, circumcised & uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; **but Christ is all, & in all. Put on THEN, as God's chosen ones**, holy & beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, & patience, bearing with one another & if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; **as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.** And above all these **put on love**, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. **And** let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful."

- **I love the rationale here, "We've been raised w/ Christ..."**
- Therefore let's stop doing _____ & start doing _____!
- I love how serious a couple of these commands sound
- "Do not lie to one another!" "You must forgive"
- Do we treat lying to each other as seriously as this?
- Do we feel forgiving one another is a command to be followed?
- If not, are we really living in light of the resurrection???
- The Bible's analogy here is morbid! You are dead to that!
- **Don't go crawl into your old dead bodies again & put on your old dead clothes...live this new, amazing life God has given you!!!**
- **Because he lives** we fight for...diversity, forgiveness, long-suffering, mercy, grace, generosity, etc...
- We have moved from being enemies to being His family
- We have been forgiven an insurmountable debt we owed
- We have received mercy & grace like we couldn't imagine
- We have a generous Father who gives us breath & sent his son & is going to send him again to lead us into life everlasting!
- This is what Jesus kept trying to get his followers to see!
- **Live like you're looking forward to that!**

- So, His commands are counter-cultural, beautiful & even more

4. His Commands Lead To A Blessed Life (Even Though It Often Doesn't Seem Like It)

- Jesus said things like, “Blessed are the persecuted...”
- Let's just be honest, it seems cruel Jesus!
- But Jesus knows what He's doing & where this is all leading
- Oftentimes, we who follow him are a bit in the dark...
- Mark 10:28- “Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything & followed you.”
- Peter probably didn't know what he was getting into, but it seems he imagined that he was going to get something
- He had, they had, given up a lot “left everything”
- Now, this movement didn't seem to be really getting off the ground in the way they would've imagined
- Jesus had crowds walking away from him, people trying to kill him & (at this moment) a rich, young ruler & opted out
- This, it's safe to say, is NOT what Peter had in mind
- Mark 10:29-30- “Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake & for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses & brothers & sisters & mothers & children & lands, w/ persecutions, & in the age to come eternal life.”
- What on earth does Jesus mean? A couple of things- we receive family, fellowship & friends through the church he puts us in
- Also, we are looking forward to a day when we will receive more than we could ever “ask, think or imagine”
- BUT we may often feel like Peter where it seems we aren't getting what we imagined & we may not even see it in this life
- I've always been challenged by this verse...
- Hebrews 11:13-16- “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them & greeted them from afar, & having acknowledged that they were strangers & exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.”

- We are to be looking forward to the resurrection of our bodies for our hope, not to the circumstances around us
- We are not to treat people like they treat us, we are to treat them how Jesus has treated us, LOOKING to that day!
- But I've seen in my life & others this, "I tried Jesus" mentality that leads to "It didn't work" & what we mean is, "My life didn't feel more enhanced, problems weren't instantly solved..."
- So much of this, TRAGICALLY, is a result of bad expectations!
- Jesus promised that those who followed him would have trouble
- But we've convinced ourselves it's another "weird teaching"
- What we've done is missed what this actually feels like

5. We Follow Him Down & He, In His Timing, Brings Us Up

- I have some friends who are doing an iron man. That's as close as I'll ever come to doing an iron man...but it's close enough☺
- What's interesting is that none of them think it will be easy
- All of them expect that it will be hard & grueling
- They are planning on how, at different stages throughout the hours of hell they are going to endure, they can help each other
- One has a foot injury...he'll need help in the run
- One isn't a strong swimmer...a couple will need to watch him
- All of them want to help each other & know they'll need it
- They have trained hard. They are eating strict. Why?
- B/c the expectations they have are correct.
- The Bible is profoundly clear that following Jesus looks like & feels like & may even lead to SUFFERING & DEATH
- BUT that as we spur one another along...Jesus is at work!
- Remembering He has a plan to work all of this out for good!
- Peter was so confused, until He encountered the resurrection
- He's a totally different guy. He's not keeping tabs anymore...
- PETER writes, "entrust our souls to a faithful creator," "cast all your cares on him b/c he cares for you," "humble yourselves & he will exalt you at the proper time"
- Here's a guy who's been changed by the resurrected Jesus!
- Peter sees that there is a pattern that informs expectations
- The Christians Pattern Is: Death Followed By Resurrection
- Once you get that, EVERYTHING else starts to make more sense
- That wasn't just Jesus' pattern; that is our pattern too...
- Philippians 3:7-11- "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of

the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things & count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ & be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God **that depends on faith--** that I may know him & **the power of his resurrection**, & may **share his sufferings**, becoming **like him in his death**, that by **any means** possible I may attain the **resurrection** from the dead.”

- What Paul’s saying here is so powerful, yet easy to miss
- We follow Jesus down into all kinds of “deaths” & Jesus brings us up (resurrects us) as we **DEPEND** on him to deliver us
- We want Jesus to rescue us from all trouble or hardship
- We want following him to mean an easier life
- **But that’s not how the Christian life works or looks**
- The Christian life is often one of suffering & death while looking forward to resurrection (Hebrews 11)
- This way of living, the way of being a Christian, Paul says, **“DEPENDS ON FAITH”** & it leads us to want to “share in his sufferings...” becoming **“LIKE HIM in his death”**
- How do you forgive your enemies? How do you love when you are persecuted? How do you trust God when you’re at your wits end?
- Through the hope that we get in the resurrection of Jesus!!!
- **Ok, so these are commands from the Risen Jesus...what now?**
- **we embrace them for our own lives...like Jesus we come to see that there is a kind of dying that is required of us**
- **“When Christ calls a man, he bids him, ‘Come & die!’”**
- **What does that even mean? Following Jesus has applications**

6. As Christians We Should Apply These Commands to Our Lives

- Medical school students don’t just read books, they have to actually touch people, move from theory to reality
- You can read all of this, memorize it, study it...GREAT!
- **But it’s all theory until you actually have to love someone**
- **So many “Christians” stop short of applying Jesus’ commands**
- **They call him Lord but they do not obey him...b/c its like death**
- **Jesus’ commands are NOT to remain theory, they should inform & empower us to be different as we encounter others...**
- **How is it that God is calling you to embrace these commands?**

○ **We Experience This In A Church Family**

- We hope that this whole experience is enjoyable & helpful
- But is that what church IS? When we think it is a place that exists to make us happy as individuals...we make it something its not
- What if your church community is actually a place, not primarily for you to be fulfilled, **but a place to lay your life down**
- A place for you to lay down your life so others can be blessed?
- 2 Corinthians 4:8-15- “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; **always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.** So death is at work in us, but life in you. Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, “I believed, & so I spoke,” we also believe, and so we also speak, **knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also w/ Jesus and bring us w/ you into his presence.** For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.”
- **Isn't that amazing? For Paul, every church, every relationship, every day was an opportunity to be given over to death.**
- He wasn't in it for him, he was in it to see them advance & was humbling himself & trusting that one day Jesus would raise him
- Along the way, those who don't yet know Jesus see this...
- John 13:35- “By this **all people** will know that you are my disciples, **if you have love for one another.**”
- **Out of our lives laid down for each other and for Jesus' sake, God's love gets put on display & peoples' lives are changed!**
- When we give our time, our finances, our energy, to our church community, there are moments that might really hurt, but it's also where we see resurrection begin to take place!
- Lonely people are welcomed into family
- Salvation & forgiveness comes for people who thought they'd never experience it!
- **But it often is preceded by a kind of dying to what we want**
- **We Experience This In Any Marriage**
- Not all of us are married, but a lot of us are...

- I started off telling you about how Shelly & I have had such a really busy and long season.
- All marriage fights or struggles seem to come down to a struggle to die to something
- Sometimes that's really hard. It might mean dying to a dream.
- When the expectations aren't nonstop bliss...when you expect a kind of dying to yourself that requires you to fully trust in Him...the chances that you'll actually make it GO WAY UP!
- Some of you are in a hard place in your marriage. How much of that would change if you changed your expectations?
- What if you said, Jesus you were willing to die for me, help me die to my view of what happiness looks like in this season & cause me to endure...to hope for the resurrection you'll bring!
- One more possible area Jesus may be calling us into death and sacrificial love:
- **Neighbors & Strangers**
- Human nature is to stick w/ our own kind, stay away from 'those kinds of people' (even in churches from "Christians")
- Church shootings keep happening & they're race driven...
- Now I hope none of us aren't going to shoot someone....
- But how many of us live trying to avoid certain kinds of people
- Because to actually do the opposite & build relationships w/ people who are different from you can be hard...like death
- But that's exactly what Jesus did. He reached across racial lines, across socio-economic lines, against lines of status & social privilege, & he encourages us to do the same! (Luke)
- In that day, people w/ those kinds of physical disabilities were not only poor, but they were also considered ritually unclean, they were complete social outcasts.
- To invite them into your home was to make your own home unclean, & the 'right kind' of people wouldn't want to associate w/ you! It would be a kind of social death.
- But Jesus says you should do it anyways b/c after that death is resurrection!
- Look around you, the neighbors, co-workers, think about the kids and adults that are social outcasts: foster care children, addicts, those of another race... who's God calling you to lay down your life to serve?
- How should we respond to this?

RESPONSE:

○ Here & Not Yet A Christian

- I recognize that so much of this can sound crazy, it is!
- Again, what keeps us still in times of trouble is knowing “HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD”

○

○ Here & Already A Christian

- If you are a Christian, death is real, but it does not have the final say in your life. Death will always give way to resurrection
- God’s greatest beauties come out of ashes.
- But, so much comes down to our unrealistic & unmet expectations- when we expect something that’s not what Jesus said would happen & when that doesn’t’ happen...
- I think for so many of us, the call of Jesus is to reset our expectations for what following him feels like when it comes to how we treat others...
- Who do we need to forgive, love, serve, pray for...

COMMUNION:

- The call of Jesus to “come & die” is only after we see that He first came & died for us!
- In fact, as we prepare to go out & live like this, we want to first come & behold the death of Jesus for us
- Where love & forgiveness actually lead, not to a figurative death, but a literal death!
- So much of this just “feels like dying” but Jesus actually died
- In love, he was willing to die for us, to lead us to resurrection